

A second chance

Fr Shay Cullen



It is a case of redemption for the 16-year old youth Juan, a pick-pocket, who was caught with stolen goods. He faced many years in prison. Philippine law can be compassionate and when minors are found guilty they are given suspended sentences. But unknown to judges, most are detained in overcrowded detention cells such as the Operation Second Chance in Cebu City. A few lucky ones such as Juan are sent to the Preda Foundation's New Dawn Homes in Zambales or Cebu. These homes offer a free diversion programme to help them grow and change with the help of value education and therapy.

In the Preda New Dawn Home Juan got a new start in life thanks to the compassion and concern of the Judge Marlon Jay G. Moneva. The judge has visited the home by the sea and saw the excellent life and development of the boys. He has promised to transfer more boys like Juan.

Juan found a warm, friendly welcome in the Preda New Dawn Home in Liloan. He began to see himself in a different way. He threw off the wrong belief that he was a worthless young criminal and began to realise he has a precious, God-given dignity and value. With therapy and value training, he learned that he is a good person and is better and happier every day. Juan is now recovering from the effects of hardship and life of conflict with the law, with society and parents. The boys in the Preda New Dawn Home have all come from a dark troubled childhood and they accepted Juan into the family.

Their human needs are provided for, everyone respects and co-operates with each other. The professional staff teach them human and spiritual values. They learn how important they are as human beings, as Jesus taught us.

Juan learned to think about values, to know what is right and wrong, good and bad, truth and untruth, love and hate, justice and injustice. He learned that as a human being he has free will and can choose good or bad, to love or to hate and do good or do evil.

But the most important of all is the formation of values in his spirit, mind, and heart. He is given the motivation and empowerment through growing self-confidence to choose the good, to speak the truth, to act with honesty.

This is no easy challenge for youth that grew up in a culture of poverty and crime that led him to steal to survive.

See www.preda.org for more information on the Preda Foundation or via shaycullen@preda.org

China: The view from over the Wall

As Red Army soldiers take to Hong Kong's streets for the first time, what's this clash of ideologies and beliefs all about – and where will it end? Lord David Alton looks at the trouble with China

The Great Wall of China – nearly 3,000 years old – can teach us a lot about Xi Jinping's 21st century China.

While visiting it, my guide reminded me that the Wall is sometimes called "the longest cemetery in the world": 400,000 of the million conscripted labourers died in its construction.

The Great Wall consists of connecting trenches, watchtowers, barracks and fortresses. It was a military construct to defend the capital, Beijing.

However, it didn't keep out Genghis Khan and his Mongols – and there were other successful breaches, too. But it did create a psychological barrier between Chinese civilisation and the hostile barbarism to the north.

Today, President Xi Jinping loves to talk about building new walls to create a hermetically sealed Chinese State.

Having declared himself President for Life, and increasingly mocked as 'the Emperor', he says he wants China to be ideologically pure – encased by walls and gates through which a network of roads, armies and weapons, from dependent, mortgaged, vassal States.

Xi's imperial inspiration is not drawn from the Ming Dynasty but is of a piece with Mao Tse Tung, China's last Emperor, (a man who described the West as "running dogs"; "Monsters" who "shall be destroyed").

Like Mao, Xi is a hard-line Communist, countenancing no opposition. His hatred of difference and dissent is why the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan are so fearful that their own vibrant way of life will no longer be tolerated in Xi's walled up China. They know where Mao's ideological hatred of difference and plurality led.

According to the historian Frank Dikötter, the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward makes Chairman Mao the greatest "mass murderer in world history."

You could argue that Mao's actions were simply of a piece with the phenomenal disregard for human life that occurred during the construction of the Great Wall. But even by those brutal standards the scale of Mao's crimes is horrifying: systematic torture, starvation and the mass killing of an estimated 45 million people who were worked, starved, or beaten to death, with a third of their homes destroyed.

Mao calculated that it was a small price to pay to achieve his ideological objectives of building Communist China.

In *Mao's Great Famine; The Story of China's Most Devastating Cata-*



Protesters take shelter as riot police fire tear gas during a demonstration in the Jordan district of Hong Kong, China. Photo: Keith Tsuji/ZUMA Wire

rophe, Dikötter describes a "staggering degree of violence" and asserts that Mao's atrocities rank "alongside the gulags and the Holocaust as one of the three greatest events of the 20th century... it was like Pol Pot's genocide multiplied 20 times over."

He describes how a child caught stealing a potato was tied up and thrown into a pond; how parents were forced to bury their children alive; how people were forced to work naked in the middle of winter; how, when the elderly or sick were no longer able to work they were starved to death.

Some were able to escape – and even make it to a little oasis of freedom called Hong Kong.

Memories are not so short that families don't remember from what they escaped or, indeed, what might be visited on them again.

President Xi works from the same playbook as Mao. Just ask the Uighurs. In 2017 he ordered officials to erect a "Great Wall of Steel" around the western region of Xinjiang.

En route to Tibet I visited Western China – home to the Turkic-speaking and largely Muslim Uighur minority. Instead of seeing, as I did, the beauty of different ethnicities and races, different religions and

traditions, President Xi has decreed that they must be re-educated, brainwashed, intimidated and re-programmed.

The notorious and ruthless Communist overseer, Chen Quanguo – China's Heinrich Mueller – was brought from Tibet to implement it.

At the recent launch of the Coalition for Genocide Response, at Westminster, we heard from a Uighur doctor about the disappearance of 100,000 Uighurs and his fear that, like Falun Gung practitioners, their corpses may have been plundered for organs.

An independent tribunal, chaired by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC, concluded that there is "incontrovertible evidence" that the State has collaborated in forced organ harvesting in China.

According to the Uighur doctor, the motivation in desecrating and digging up over 40 Uighur cemeteries, with corpses and bones thrown to the vultures, is not simply to destroy identity, and to use the dead to intimidate the living.

It is also to destroy evidence.

He says that these expanding cemeteries were used to bury plundered cadavers and digging them up now is an attempt to eradicate the evidence of mass atrocities.

The Genocide Coalition heard about Tursunay Ziyawudun a 41-year-old Uighur woman from Kunes County. She has described rape, abuse and widespread sterilisation in Xinjiang's re-education camps.

Ms Ziyawudun says the Communist authorities regularly "took women to the hospital and operated on them so that they no longer could have children" or forced them to take medicine "to prevent them from reproducing."

In a chilling testament she says: "Their methods of torture were always different, but a common practice was to tie you up on a metal chair during interrogation. They cut off our hair, after pulling it through the bars of our cell, including that of elderly women. We were all handcuffed, shackled, and frequently called out for interrogation. The screaming, pleading, crying, is still in my head."

Looking over the wall at the mass incarceration of Uighurs, the people of Hong Kong recall their own stories.

They know about China's churches that were desecrated, looted and turned into storerooms and factories – two of which I visited in Shanghai 30 years ago.

Hong Kongers – many of whom

"We know from the history of conflicts such as Northern Ireland that the presence of troops on the streets can only end in more bloodshed. I urge the Chinese and Hong Kong authorities to de-escalate tensions and restore democracy and the rule of law. This goes against Hong Kong's legal framework and will not help restore peace..."

John Song, a spokesperson for Stand with Hong Kong, a pro-democracy group, commenting on the deployment of Chinese PLA troops on the streets of Hong Kong for the first time during the pro-democracy protests